



Hard Duty

Mark E. Cooper

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Humanity's last encounter with aliens saw sixteen point two billion people killed in a war with the Merkiaari that had spanned decades.

Two hundred years later, the Alliance is cautiously exploring beyond its borders again, but the survey corp is considered a mere gesture by some. General Burgton of the 501st Infantry Regiment believes a lack of expansion is leading the Alliance into stagnation. So when one small ship discovers a new alien race, it should be an easy decision to make contact, but what if the aliens are like the Merkiaari?

Captain Jeff Colgan of the survey ship ASN Canada is at the tip of the spear. His ship made the discovery, his crew's lives are on the line, and his decisions will decide the outcome. Will the Alliance make new friends or will he be responsible for another sixteen billion deaths? When the aliens discover his ship and begin hunting him through their system, his mission changes from one of study to one of survival.

Hard Duty Details

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Author : Mark E. Cooper

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From Reader Review Hard Duty for online ebook

Carly Kirk says

I cannot even explain how much I enjoyed this book! It's well written with characters you care about (even one that annoyed me to no end - I wanted to slap her silly) and even though it follows a lot of different characters it never got confusing. Can't wait to read the rest of the series.

Francis Franklin says

I'm only 15% in so this isn't a review, just a comment.

The narrative is very focussed on Eric - on his thoughts and abilities and actions - so that everything around him lacks real clarity and depth. It's also disingenuous in that while Eric is awesomely capable, the relative technology level of those around him is incoherent. (This is a real problem faced by science fiction generally - as soon as you get into details of technology, you're doomed. And the further into the future you go, the worse it gets.) For example, here we are, hundreds of years in the future, on another planet, part of a space-faring diaspora that has overcome even the limitations of relativity, and yet ordinary people only have pocket computers and (separately) communicators?

But that was just the nail in the coffin. It's quite frustrating to have a teaser prologue and then set off on a story that seems to have no relevance to the prologue. No doubt the connection will become clearer, but 15% is a lot to read without any hint of a connection.

Dan Lunghofer says

I am torn about how to rate this. The storyline is very well done and very interesting - years after a devastating war, humanity reaches out for first contact, and then the aliens we thought we had beaten come back.

The Shan are described in a full way, giving them a reasonably rich culture and identity. It's obvious the author spent some time researching large cats (OK, minor spoiler there). The first contacts between the humans and the Shan are well-written and carefully thought out, although it seems like the Shan become more accepting of humans at a relatively fast pace.

There is an unconnected storyline of a super-soldier that takes up the first portion of the book and then comes back with a seemingly random chapter at the end. I'm not sure how it fits in (but that's only after reading this one book - it might get explained in future books).

There are some minor grammatical and typographical errors, but nothing so bad they take away from the overall experience.

I will probably add the rest of the series to my "to read" list.

William Bentrin says

Hard Duty by Mark E. Cooper

This is book one of the Merkiaari Wars. A survey ship stumbles across a radio transmission that isn't the Merkiaari. Desperate for allies in their stalmated war with the Merkiaari, they make contact with the Shan. The Shan have had their own experiences with the Merkiaari and are as distrustful as the humans.

The survey ship Canada is ill equipped to make first contact with an alien race. They send home for help and get a ship load of academics who quickly discover that reality is different than the classroom.

The story within the story deals with the Vipers. Vipers are enhanced humans who were the deciding factor in keeping the Merkiaari from overwhelming mankind. The fighting abilities of the Vipers and the vastly enhanced skill set also keeps them from re-melding with normals. Their commander uses them as troubleshooter to keep order in the human empire.

The Shan are an interesting alien race that the author has done a nice job in a contrast and comparison with humans and the ensuing interaction. The book has plenty of action and I hope to read more from Cooper.

I recommend it.

web site: <http://www.impulsebooks.co.uk/blog/>

Jim says

I actually started reading the second book in this series until I realized that there was a series. So, I got as far as the third chapter in the second book (What Price Honor) and stopped to read this one. I'm very glad I did. Right up front, these are very well written books for Amazon ebooks. I have gotten very skeptical of Amazon ebooks lately since they are so cheap you almost expect and I have been getting what I paid for, cheaply written, hard to read books! Again, no so with Hard Duty nor with the follow-on.

The writing flows smoothly and is effortless to read. What does make these books very interesting is the fact that there are actually several stores told, each separately with very little tie-in until I believe the very last. This is about an Earth-led Alliance making first contact with a new alien race, the Shan. It is also introduces us to a group of warriors called Vipers who will play a very important part in the upcoming Merkiarri War. Now Earth has already met and defeated the Merkiarri but that alien race is all about conquest. You do not have peace with the Merkiarri until every one of them are dead! Earth has learned a hard lesson in that while we thought we were alone in the entire universe and tried every which way we knew to make contact with other life, that other life found us quite easily and wanted to destroy us! Not what we had planned.

Still, we have set out to still find other civilizations, if they exist, but we do so very, very quietly. We have found the Shan and have studied them for some time. They have also had their run-in with the Merkairri and are just now recovering. They do not explore outside their solar system but have been able to develop

adequate defenses against future Merkairri attacks, or so they believe.

An Earth exploratory scientific vessel has found the Shan doing exactly what Earth did to attract the Merkairri. We want to warn them but don't want them to think we are hostile. How the Captain of the Earth ship Canada does his mission in relation to the Shan is a fascinating story.

Then the Merkairri attack!

John says

Surprisingly I give it a 4 .. it is not a 4 in my normal rating criteria. But in its genre it is. It is your typical book of this type but for some reason I cannot grasp it is better than most of them. Still in the B grade arena but at a higher level. This probably makes no sense as I cannot pick why it is better than others of the same class :)

Darlene says

I thought this was a great book. Humanity finding another alien race to ally with against a common enemy. There was, however, a side story about a super marine posing as a mercenary. I assume his story line would eventually tie in with the other one. Beyond good character development and a good story the one thing that bothered me was that the book ended too abruptly. I realize it's a series but this book forces you to read the next book to find out what happens. No ends are tied up. I feel there should have been some closure with some tidbits left over to make me want to read on. I will however like to read the next book just to see what happens.

Lukas Lovas says

Well, this book could have had 5/5....but I hate cliffhangers with a passion. I don't mind a plot being spread out over several books, I don't need each of them to be a standalone...but I do need at least some sort of....ending. Finishing up. Not leave stuff hanging....

Other than the end which wasn't an end, the book was quite good. The alien culture was just alien enough to be alien, but not so much that I couldn't relate. The main POV characters were strong and talented, and mostly likeable. Plot is good - not what I expected, but gripping and thoughtprovoking (sometimes). It reminds me a bit of the old hard SF, but written with the newer styles and different emphasis.

Cathy (cathepsut) says

Free give-away by the author, thank you very much! Review will follow.

No oil for pacifists says

After a military prelude, this starts as hard, first-contact SF. Then there's a shift in narrative perspective from the alien POV the borders on fantasy—not my favorite genre. When the feces hit the rotating element at the end, the two threads merge, though it remains unclear (in the sequels) just when the military will come in, guns-a-blazing.

Above-average writing. Might reevaluate toward 4 stars should I read sequel.

David Traver Adolphus says

There's good painfully earnest self-published work--then there's bad painfully earnest self-published work. Good is something like Larry Correia's *Monster Hunter International*; bad is, well, bad is *Hard Duty*. The combination of too much of the wrong kind of exposition (ie, details about a hotel room but not about why the protagonist is 200 years old), and many, many typographical and grammatical errors, just makes it unreadable. If there was an editor and copyeditor involved, I'll eat my hat. I walked away.

Adam Windsor says

I liked a lot about this book. The bulk of it is a fun first contact + SF warfare page turner. But man, there are a couple of major structural issues.

Issue number 1 is that chapters 1, 2 and 26 are devoted to a storyline that has NO intersection with the rest of this book. Presumably it will in a later book, but why not hold these chapters over for that later volume?

The section is the ham-handed use of multiple cliffhangers at the end. Yes, I understand that you want me to buy book 2. You know how you do that? ****Write a satisfying book one****. Books without proper endings are not generally satisfying.

If I do pick up book 2, it will be despite the cliffhangers, not because of them.

David says

The book lacked editorial organization. Viper plot line may have a story that becomes important in a later book but it added nothing to this one. The story is mostly consistent but feels more like a series of vignettes sewn together in an unbalanced way. There are a couple of spelling errors likely caused by a spell checker replacing with the wrong word. I got the book for free and it is an e-publishing. The style of writing and content of the story was interesting but it needed a better focus on the topic and formation of the story.

Michael Mardel says

Hard duty by Cooper I found to be a complex story in two parts. First I meet Eric and then I meet the humans and then I meet the Shan with the main character being Shima. All characters are well developed and I felt positive toward Eric despite his mission. Will he make it out of the jungle where he's been infiltrating a guerilla movement? The next leap is the humans who want to warn the Shan about the enemy, Merkiaari. Will they stay and fight or are the Merkiaari too strong? Some of the humans have been left on Harmony so we see the reinforcements that the Shan have set up to survive. Great descriptions of life in space and how they all communicate.

Allan Ashinoff says

I downloaded this book for free on Amazon. Good story, could use some editing thought...most obvious are common words like realize and civilization which lack the Z and instead have an S in its place. Further, I think the dual plots could be weaved closer together. By this I mean switching back and forth throughout the book rather than starting on one storyline then abandoning it for the rest of the novel. I enjoyed the story enough to buy its sequel and hope the author understands, as I would, that this review is not in any way condemnation.
